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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 16, 1957

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: Present Political Situation

PARTICIPANTS: Lic. Jorge Skinner-Klee, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala
Col. Jose Cruz Salazar, Ambassador of Guatemala
ARA - Assistant Secretary Rubottom
MID - Mr. Baynard King, Guatemala Desk Officer

COPIES TO: ARA(2), OLI(2), RPA, AmEmbassy, GUATEMALA

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Mr. Rubottom said that the Department hoped very much that the constitutional processes which had so far been followed in Guatemala since President Castillo Armas' assassination would continue to be followed. He said that the Department, in accordance with its policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, did not favor any one candidate in the presidential elections scheduled for October 20, 1957, but hoped that the Guatemalan people would have the opportunity, through the electoral process, freely to choose the man they wanted to be their President for the next six-year term. He hoped also that nothing would happen between now and the elections which would upset the constitutionality which had been developed in Guatemala under the late President Castillo Armas.

Mr. Skinner-Klee said that he agreed with Mr. Rubottom and that he too thought it was most important that Guatemala show it was capable of carrying on in accordance with the constitution in spite of the great loss of Castillo. Though Guatemalan tradition was against orderly transition of power, and the present political balance in Guatemala was most delicate, the Foreign Minister had high hopes that Guatemala would be able to survive this sensitive period and hold normal elections as scheduled. He was becoming more optimistic as time went on, he said, because he considered that every day gained without attempts against constitutional order was another victory for stability. Although he personally had little power over the course of internal political events in Guatemala, he intended to do all he could to further this growing stability.

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The Minister also discussed the candidacy of General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes. He said that the General was making quite a splash and was playing for all they were worth in his own interest certain rumors. For instance, he had recently been successful in having a letter he had written to the New York Times published in that newspaper. While this in itself was nothing unusual, it was being interpreted among some elements in Guatemala, with Ydigoras' encouragement, as a sign of United States approval of his candidacy. The Minister also said that the General's wife had been going about Guatemala City saying that her husband had the "blessing" of the Department of State, and that some people were taking this seriously. Mr. Rubottom said that Mrs. Ydigoras' claim was ridiculous and untrue. The Minister stated further that Ydigoras had been actively seeking and probably had the support of some highly placed individuals in the business world in the United States. The Minister seemed strongly opposed to General Ydigoras.

BK

ARA:MID:BKing:tag:9/18/57